LAS CASAS

ALICE J. KNIGHT

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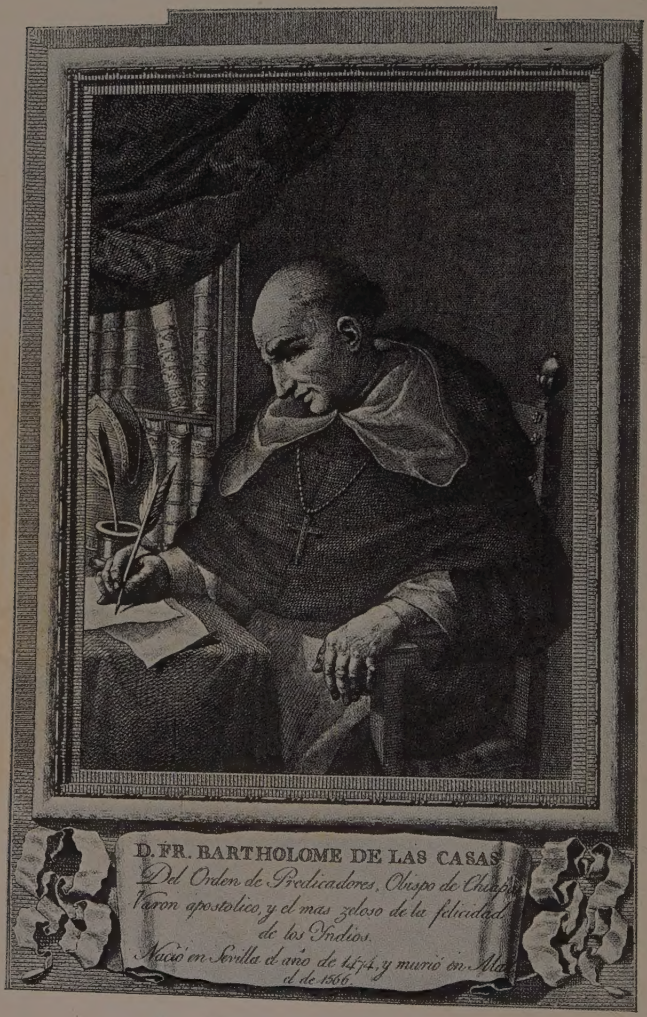
LAS CASAS

"THE APOSTLE OF THE INDIES"



Bartholomé De Las Casas

Frontispiece

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LAS CASAS

"*The* APOSTLE *of the* INDIES"

BY

ALICE J. KNIGHT

DEACONESS IN THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF AMERICA

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TO

MY FRIEND AND BISHOP,

THE RIGHT REVEREND
ROBERT LEWIS PADDOCK, D.D.

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FOREWORD

Early American history is full of interest and romance. Great figures move across the scene. Columbus, Ponce de Leon, Cortez, Alvarado, Pizarro,—every schoolboy is familiar with their names and deeds. But one man there is that stands out conspicuously among these heroes of discovery and conquest, one not bent on fame and glory, not possessed of that greed for gold that led to so much ruthless cruelty toward the natives of the New World, —a man consumed with one burning desire: to spend himself in the service of others, to protect and save the weak and helpless. What he himself might suffer in the performance of this work mattered not at all.

Strange that to so many even the name of this man is unknown! Yet for more than fifty years no one either in all the New World or in Spain was more prominently before the eyes of all than was Las Casas, the great "Apostle of the Indies." Not only as a missionary, but as an historian, a philanthropist, a man of business, a ruler in the Church, he towers above even the notable men of that most remarkable time. His noble, self-denying, heroic life, spent

in untiring service to God and man, is an inspiration and an example much needed in this materialistic, money-getting, ease-loving age.

ALICE J. KNIGHT.

HOOD RIVER, OREGON.
June, 1917.

LAS CASAS

CHAPTER I

BARTOLOMÉ THE YOUTH

WHENEVER we hear of a famous man,—whether he be artist, author, statesman, soldier, scientist, great traveler, or missionary,—we like to know what sort of a boy he was. We are curious about his home, his school, his parents, his friends, and all the various influences that helped to make him the man he was. Such knowledge gives us a better understanding of his after life, and a fuller sympathy with his aims and achievements.

Although I have headed this chapter "Bartolomé the Youth," we know comparatively little of Las Casas until he was about twenty-eight years old. In later life we find him impetuous, loving, tireless in energy, with a fiery temper that blazed out in quick wrath against all injustice and cruelty toward the weak and helpless, possessing a brilliant mind and great talents, never giving up striving against the wrong, and never knowing when he was beaten.

These qualities he must have possessed in some measure as a boy, but, unfortunately, no historian has opened up for us those early pages.

Bartolomé was born in the city of Seville, Spain, in the year 1474. We are not told the day of the month. Of his mother we know nothing, but his father was Pedro de Casaus. He was of French descent, but the family had lived in Spain for over two hundred years, and because of valuable aid given to one of the Spanish kings in the wars against the Moors, they had been ennobled, and after a time the name lost its French spelling and took the Spanish form, Las Casas.

Bartolomé certainly lived in very interesting times. When he was between eighteen and nineteen years of age Columbus came to Seville on his return from his first voyage, which resulted in the discovery of the West India Islands. He brought with him many strange and wonderful things,—birds of brilliant color, such as had never been seen before, gold and pearls, and, most wonderful of all, six Indians. We can imagine the crowds of people who must have followed that little procession as it passed through the streets of the city, pushing and crowding one another to get a sight of the great Admiral and the men who had sailed with him over unknown waters, and especially of the painted red men, who were, I am sure,

quite as curious on their part, and probably badly frightened besides.

It is difficult for us to understand now how much courage it took in those times to put to sea in frail little caravels, which were all the adventurer had, and go sailing over the waste of waters, not knowing what was ahead of him, or if he would ever find land on the other side. The rude maps of that day still showed a great Sea of Darkness. Dragons and all sorts of frightful sea-monsters were pictured in the unexplored parts of the ocean, and the popular idea was that if the daring mariner should sail too far over the slope of the round globe, he might be drawn by force of gravitation into a fiery gulf and never come back to his friends again. So the men that thus ventured were heroes in the eyes of the people. Never had such a voyage been heard of as the great Admiral had made, and all, from the King and Queen to the little street boys, were eager to hear about it.

Although he does not mention it, it is probable that Las Casas often saw Columbus in his father's house. Pedro de Casas, Bartolomé's father, and his uncle, Francisco de Penalosa, both went out with the Admiral on his second voyage. Columbus had then been made Viceroy of the Indies, and Bartolomé's father was on his staff, while his uncle commanded the soldiers. One of the Indians that Columbus

brought home from the first expedition he gave to Pedro de Casas, but the good Queen would not allow these Indians to be kept as slaves, and insisted that they should be sent back at once. All six had been baptized at Barcelona, with the King and Queen,—Ferdinand and Isabella,—as godfather and godmother; and when, soon after this, one of them died, people said he was the first Indian to go to Heaven.

Bartolomé's uncle remained in the Indies for three years, and returning, shortly afterward died in battle with the Moors. His father did not come home until 1500.

While his father and uncle were away, Bartolomé was studying at the famous university of Salamanca, where he took his degree as doctor of laws just previous to his father's return.

Very naturally, now that his education was finished, the young man's thoughts turned to the Indies. He seems to have gone out, as did the other colonists, with the idea of making money. Wealth and power appeared very desirable things to possess. How little he dreamed of the future that was before him! He knew not that the time was coming when he should give up all that he had,—money, time, strength, and talents,—for the sake of the great, deathless principles of liberty, justice, and mercy. All unknowing, he was to enter a fight that would last his life long and

cost him all that he held dear while struggling to protect the gentle, helpless natives of the New World from the cruelty and oppression of the Spaniards, until he should come to be called Las Casas "The Protector of the Indians." He had marked out one path for himself; God was to point out to him quite a different one. It is good to know that he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

CHAPTER II

A BIT OF HISTORY

When Columbus returned to Spain after his first voyage, he left on the island of Hispaniola, now called Haiti, a little colony of about forty men.

On his second voyage he sailed first to this same place, arriving in November, late at night. A salute was fired to let the settlers know that their friends had returned, but no answer came, and it was feared that something was wrong. Sure enough, when the voyagers went ashore in the morning they found eleven dead bodies and no living men. The fort had been destroyed and the tools and provisions were gone.

This was a sad welcome; all the sadder because it need not have happened but for the evil doings of the colonists. After the departure of Columbus they had soon quarreled among themselves and had treated the inoffensive natives so cruelly that, unable to endure it, they had risen against the Spaniards and killed them all.

Columbus at once went to work to build another little town, not far from the first, and

called it Isabella. A church was erected, a number of houses built, and the whole surrounded by a strong wall. This being done, he placed his brother Diego in charge, and started off with three ships to make further explorations.

On this voyage he coasted along the southern shore of Cuba, discovered Jamaica and a number of smaller islands, and sailed all around Hispaniola. But he was worn out with excitement and fatigue. Discovering new countries is hard work, and it is still harder to try to govern unruly and evil men. He became very ill, and was brought back to Isabella quite unconscious. When at length he came to himself he found his brother Bartholomew beside him. This was a great comfort, for the brothers were very fond of each other, and Columbus needed all the help he could get. He made Bartholomew governor of Hispaniola, but no governor could do very much with such a company of lawless adventurers as were these Spaniards. Like a great many people of to-day, they wanted to get rich quickly and without working. They spent their time in fighting, roaming about the country, abusing the Indians, and killing them and one another. At length the natives, exasperated beyond endurance, rose against them as before, and many Spaniards lost their lives.

In the end, however, of course it was the Indians that suffered the most. They could

not stand against the white men. Their bows and arrows would not pierce the soldiers' armor, and they ran in terror from the sight of a horse, an animal that they had never seen before. Twenty great bloodhounds were let loose upon them also, which tore them in pieces; and at length, in despair, they submitted to their enslavers.

They were used as slaves by the white men, being forced to cultivate the land for their conquerors and to work in the gold mines. The poor creatures, whose lives had been so simple as to require no hard labor, died by the thousands, and many were whipped to death or killed outright, so that in a little while that beautiful island became a place of great suffering, and the Spaniards were feared and hated by those gentle natives, who at their coming had been ready to welcome them as friends.

Many of the colonists grew dissatisfied because they were not getting rich as fast as they wished, and some returned to Spain with complaints of Columbus. Finally Francisco Bobadilla was sent out to look into matters. He treated the great Admiral very unjustly and cruelly, sending him back to Spain in chains; but in this action he far exceeded his instructions. Ferdinand and Isabella, grieved for the indignity that had been put upon the man who had given them a new country, caused him to be released at once, and recalled Bobadilla.

Nicholas de Ovando was now appointed to rule Hispaniola, and it was with him that Las Casas went out, as we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

A NEW WORLD

When Las Casas arrived in Hispaniola with Ovando, the new governor, they were greeted by the news that a huge nugget of gold had been found, weighing thirty-five pounds. It was shaped like a flat dish, and to celebrate the discovery of such a treasure, a banquet was given and a roast pig served up on this novel platter. The nugget was sent to Spain, as a present to King Ferdinand, on the same ship as the infamous Bobadilla, the deposed governor, but the ship was wrecked in a terrible storm soon after leaving port, and both the nugget and the governor went down into the depths of the ocean.

Las Casas and his companion also heard that there had been another uprising of the Indians and that many had been captured and made slaves.

Queen Isabella had instructed Ovando that the Indians must be free, only paying tribute, as all Spanish subjects did, and that they should be recompensed for the work they did in the mines. The good Queen little knew how far

her officers were from treating them as she had commanded.

Las Casas does not seem to have felt any particular pity for the Indians in the beginning. Like the rest of the adventurers, he had come to seek his fortune in the New World, where there seemed such wonderful chances to grow rich. He obtained from the governor an estate of his own, took Indians as slaves, and sent some of them to work in the mines, though he did not abuse nor overwork them, as others did. For eight years he not only held Indians as slaves, but he was with Ovando during a second war against the natives in one of the provinces of Hispaniola, and saw terrible deeds of cruelty, yet never appears to have made a single protest. This seems very strange when we think of what he said and did against slavery a few years later, and how his whole after life was spent in the service of these oppressed people. His eyes, however, were not yet opened, and he looked at things after the fashion of his time.

Ovando was a good governor, Las Casas says, "but not for Indians." He was a little, fair-haired man, gentle in manner, and most polite, but he made everybody understand that he intended to be obeyed. When any gentleman became troublesome, Ovando would invite him to dine with him, talk so pleasantly and flatteringly to his guest that he would think the governor

must mean to do something very grand for him, and then, suddenly pointing down the harbor, would ask in which of the ships lying at anchor the gentleman would like to take passage for Spain. The poor man, confused and alarmed, yet afraid to protest, would very likely say that he had no money to pay his fare. Whereupon the very polite little governor would at once tell him not to let that trouble him, as he, Ovando, would provide the funds. And off the gentleman would have to go from the dinner table to the ship.

But although Ovando ruled the white men well, he was neither just nor kind to the Indians. He gave them out in lots of fifty, or a hundred, or five hundred, to those who wanted them, and the poor creatures were worked to death and abused without mercy. When, in desperation, they would rise against their tyrants, they were punished savagely, being burned alive, torn to pieces by bloodhounds, and drowned in the ocean or the rivers, even helpless little children often being treated in this way.

In 1510 four Dominican friars came over to Hispaniola and settled in San Domingo. The Sunday after their arrival one of them preached a sermon on the glories of heaven,—a discourse that Las Casas heard, and one that made a great impression on him. In the afternoon the Prior asked to have the Indians sent

to the church to be taught; so they came,—men, women, and children; and this custom the Dominicans continued every Sunday afterward.

Some time in this same year Las Casas was ordained priest. We should like to know how he came to take this step, but he tells us nothing about it. He threw himself into his new duties with the same energy that he had used in his business, and began at once to teach the Indians, as the Dominicans were doing. Whatever he did, all his life long, he did with all his might, and very soon he became famous all over the island for his learning and goodness.

The little settlement of four Dominicans had increased by the end of the next year to twelve; nor had they been there many months before they began to have their eyes opened to the wrongs the Indians were suffering at the hands of the white men.

A Spaniard who had killed his wife in a fit of jealousy and had been hiding for two or three years, repenting of his crime and tired of living in concealment and fear, came to the Dominicans by night and begged them to take him in and let him stay with them as a lay brother. When they were convinced that the man was truly repentant they received him. He told them of the dreadful cruelties of which he and others had been guilty toward the natives, and the good fathers soon felt that they

must look into the matter. This they did, and were not long in coming to the conclusion that it was a great evil to make slaves of the Indians and that they must do something to put a stop to it. So they fasted and prayed, and conferred together, and finally decided that one of their number, Father Antonio Montesino, should preach a sermon on the subject.

The week before the sermon was to be preached all the Dominicans went throughout the town and invited every one, from the governor down to the humblest citizen, to come to the church on the following Sunday, which was the First Sunday in Advent, to hear the sermon, which, they said, would be upon a new subject, interesting to all of them.

Of course every one was curious to hear what would be said, and when Sunday came the church was crowded. There was the governor, Diego Columbus, in his pew, with his wife,—a grand-niece of King Ferdinand,—and there were the officers of the colony, all the prominent citizens, in fact, everybody in the town. Father Montesino preached from the text: I am "the voice of one crying in the wilderness."

He told the congregation that they were living in mortal sin because of their cruelty and their tyranny over the innocent natives. He told them plainly that by their oppression, their cruel tortures, and the forced labor in the mines to which they subjected these helpless people,

they were killing the whole race, and he declared that they had no chance of salvation while they continued in such sin.

You may be sure that Father Montesino's hearers were both frightened and angry at this bold sermon. All honor to the brave man who dared to preach it and to the little company of his brethren who stood with him! It was the first voice raised in the new world against slavery.

That afternoon the citizens had a meeting at the governor's house and appointed a committee to visit and rebuke the preacher. However, this accomplished nothing, as neither Father Montesino, the Prior of the little community, nor any of the brotherhood was at all moved by their threats, and all they obtained from the Dominicans was an agreement that Father Montesino should preach again the next Sunday and endeavor to please his congregation *as far as his conscience would permit.*

The committee told everybody that the Father was going to retract, and again the next Sunday the church was crowded to hear Montesino eat his own words. But, instead of the humble apology that was expected, his auditors received a more terrible rebuke than before, Montesino threatening them with eternal torments if they continued to illtreat the Indians, or engage in the slave trade.

Angry as the Spaniards were, they could

do nothing, for the good fathers minded their blustering and threats not at all. Las Casas was partly in sympathy with the Dominicans, but he thought they went too far. He believed the Indians should be treated kindly, but saw no harm in slavery; for all that, however, he did not forget the sermon.

The next year Diego Columbus decided to conquer the island of Cuba, and he appointed Diego Valasquez, one of the most respected colonists in San Domingo, commander of the expedition. Valasquez was a warm friend of Las Casas', and after a time sent for him to act as his chaplain.

This war against the helpless and innocent natives was as cruel as all the others. They were chased and torn to pieces by bloodhounds; they were burned alive; their hands and feet were cut off, and those that were not killed were made slaves. Forced to work beyond their strength in the gold mines, half starved and beaten, their lives were full of misery, without a gleam of hope, and in despair numbers of them,—sometimes whole villages at a time,—committed suicide. One story is told that makes us smile, although it is so sad.

A whole village of Indians resolved to hang themselves and so escape their sufferings. In some way their master learned of their intention and came upon them just as they stood ready to carry it out.

"Go get me a rope, too," he said to them; "for I must hang myself with you." He told them they were so useful to him that he must go where they were going, so that they might still labor for him. They, believing that they could not free themselves from him even in the future life, sadly gave up their plan, and went to work again.

Las Casas did all he could to protect the Indians, and soon became known as their friend, and won their entire trust. They called him "Behique," which was the name they gave their magicians, and regarded him with awe. As the natives had no written language, the way in which the Spaniards conveyed information to one another by means of mysterious marks on paper seemed a kind of magic to them. When the expedition was approaching a town, Las Casas would send a messenger in advance, carrying a paper scrawled all over and hidden in a hollow reed. The messenger would show the paper to the Indians and tell them that the Christians were coming and the father wanted them to furnish so many huts for them to sleep in, so much food for them to eat, and so on, adding: "If you do not, Behique will be much displeased." So great was their confidence in him that they would at once obey his commands, which they believed the messenger had read from the paper, and in this way Las Casas was

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able to save them from the dreadful massacres that had so often wiped out whole villages.

But one day a terrible thing occurred. Valasquez had gone away to be married and had appointed a Spaniard, named Pamfilo de Narvaez, commander in his absence. The soldiers, —about three hundred in number,—drew near a village called Caonao, and stopped to eat in the dry bed of a river, where there were a great many stones on which they sharpened their swords. When, at length, they entered the town some two thousand natives were gathered together, all sitting peacefully on the ground to look at the wonderful strangers and especially to see the horses, at which they were never tired of gazing. About five hundred others were busy in one of the huts, preparing food for the Spaniards, as Las Casas had told them to do. Suddenly one of the soldiers drew his sword,—why, nobody ever knew,—and began slashing right and left at the defenseless Indians. Instantly the others followed his example, and before half of the Indians had realized what was happening, the place was piled with dead bodies. Las Casas, who was not present at the moment, hearing what was going on, in a white heat of rage rushed out into the square to stop the slaughter; but before he succeeded in doing this many hundred helpless men, women, and children had been butchered.

Not long after this dreadful event Valasquez

returned to Cuba, and, the whole island being now subdued, he proceeded to found a number of towns and to divide the land and the Indians among the Spaniards. Las Casas and a dear friend of his, Pedro de Renteria, who had lived near him in Hispaniola, received together a whole village of Indians, and with them the land they had owned,—some of this land being the very best on the island.

Renteria was a quiet, thoughtful, unworldly man, humble and plain in his ways, though of considerable learning. Las Casas seems to have been very fond of him, though he tells us but little about him.

The two friends soon had a large house built, in which they lived happily for a year, using the enslaved Indians to cultivate the plantation and work the mines; for as yet neither of them had a thought that it was wrong to hold slaves, and believed that they were doing their duty to these natives by being kind to them and carefully instructing them in the truths of Christianity.

CHAPTER IV

A NEW LIFE

Las Casas was the only priest on the island of Cuba, and at Pentecost (Whitsunday) he arranged to go and preach and say mass in the new town of Sancti Spiritus. In looking for a text, he came across some verses in the Apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, which made him stop and think whether after all he was right in making the Indians work for him as slaves. These are the verses:

He that sacrificeth of a thing wrongfully gotten, his offering is ridiculous, and the gifts of unjust men are not accepted.

The Most High is not pleased with the offerings of the wicked, neither is He pacified for sin by the multitude of sacrifices.

Whoso bringeth an offering of the goods of the poor doeth as one that killeth the son before the father's eyes.

The bread of the needy is their life; he that defraudeth them thereof is a man of blood.

He that taketh away his neighbor's living slaveth him, and he that defraudeth the laborer of his hire is a bloodshedder.

As Las Casas read these verses he seemed to hear the voice of God speaking to his heart. He remembered Montesino's sermon, he thought of all the cruelties and injustices from which the gentle, helpless Indians suffered. At last his

eyes were opened, and he saw plainly that it was neither right to take the lands and the property of the natives nor to hold them as slaves.

For Bartolomé Las Casas to see the right was always to do it. He resolved at once to give up his own Indians and to preach against enslaving them. He knew very well that if he did this they might, and probably would, fall into the hands of those who would not treat them so kindly, but he realized that he could not preach to others against slavery while he continued to possess slaves himself. Therefore he went at once to the governor and told him what he had resolved to do. The governor was very much astonished, and begged Las Casas to consider well what he was doing and at least to take fifteen days to think it over. But Las Casas refused to take even one day, saying that his mind was made up.

Four Dominicans, who had been sent from Hispaniola to found a community, arrived in Cuba about this time. They and Las Casas preached constantly and earnestly on the sin of holding the natives in slavery; but although the Spaniards were frightened, they were not turned from their evil ways, and Las Casas resolved to go to Spain and see if he could not so present the matter to the King that the whole system of dividing up the Indians and their lands among the white men,

to be their property, might be done away with.

He wrote to his friend and partner Renteria, telling him that he was about to go to Spain on a very important mission, which he was sure would give him great joy when he heard what it was, and he asked him to hasten home, as otherwise he might not see him, it being necessary to leave at once.

Renteria was in Jamaica, where he had gone to buy seed, stock and so on for their farm. While there he had stayed in a Franciscan convent during the season of Lent, and had given much time to prayer and meditation. For a long time he had been troubled about holding the Indians as slaves, but he had thought that if he and his partner were to give up the savages, they would only be worse off. Now, however, as he thought and prayed, a plan occurred to him: He would go to Spain and get permission to found schools, where the Indian children might be gathered in and taught, and thus some of them might be saved; for he saw clearly that if things kept on as they were, it would not be long before all the Indians on the islands would be destroyed.

As soon as Renteria received Las Casas' letter he hurried home, wondering why his friend also wanted to go to Spain, and eager to tell him what he had in mind.

Renteria was a very popular man, so when he landed, not only Las Casas was there to

meet him but the governor and many other friends; therefore, it was night before the two partners had a chance to talk quietly together. Then each listened in astonishment to the plan of the other. Finally they decided that as the plan of Las Casas was the more important, and as he was a priest and of a noble family and could therefore more easily get a hearing at court, he should be the one to go. They sold everything that Renteria had brought from Jamaica,—even the farm itself being disposed of,—in order to raise money for the journey.

Now, while the two friends had been occupied with these thoughts and plans, the Dominicans had been coming to the conclusion that they could do no good in Cuba, since they could not help the Indians and the Spaniards would not listen to them, and they decided to send one of their number with Las Casas to San Domingo,—from which port he was to sail for Spain,—for the purpose of asking for instructions from their superior, Pedro de Cordova. A young deacon went also, and all three soon started on their journey. The Dominican, however, was taken ill and died before the party reached San Domingo.

Pedro de Cordova sympathized heartily with Las Casas, though warning him that he would meet with many difficulties; but the man who is afraid to undertake a thing because of the difficulties in the way is not much of a man,

and Las Casas was only the more determined to keep on. The Dominicans were very poor and had never been able to finish their humble monastery building, so they sent Father Montesino, who had preached the famous sermon against slavery the year after their coming to Hispaniola, with Las Casas to Spain, that he might try to raise the money needed; and in 1515 they sailed.

As soon as they arrived in Seville, Montesino introduced Las Casas to the good bishop of Seville, who did all he could to help him, giving him a letter to the King and to others of the court that might in all probability be interested.

It would be too long a story to tell,—the chronicle of all that Las Casas went through in his struggles to right the wrongs of the Indians.

Queen Isabella was now dead, and while he was in Spain King Ferdinand died also. Charles V, grandson of Ferdinand, was the heir to the throne, and during his minority the great Cardinal Ximenes acted as regent, while Charles' tutor Adrian was associated with the cardinal in the government. The man who had most to do with the affairs of the Indians was the Bishop of Burgos, Fonseca. As he himself had hundreds of slaves working for him in the gold mines of the islands, he was naturally not at all in favor of freeing them, and there were many like him who were striving as hard

to prevent the liberation of the Indians as Las Casas was striving to bring it about.

Among other attempts that were made to throw obstacles in the way of Las Casas was one that was rather amusing. Cardinal Ximenes, as they sat in council, ordered the old laws for the Indies to be read. The clerk who read them, coming to one that he knew his masters were not obeying, thought to shield them and hinder Las Casas by changing the wording; but, unfortunately for him, Las Casas knew the laws by heart, and he cried out:

"The law says no such thing!"

The clerk, being ordered to read it again, read it as before, when again Las Casas broke in:

"The law says no such thing!"

A third time the clerk was made to read it; a third time he persisted in his own way of wording, and a third time Las Casas interrupted by saying:

"That law says no such thing!"

The Cardinal, provoked by so many interruptions, rebuked him, when he exclaimed:

"Your lordship may order my head to be cut off if what the clerk reads is what the law says."

And snatching the book from the clerk, he proved that he was right. We cannot help thinking that if the clerk had known "the clerico," as he usually calls himself, a little bet-

ter, he would not have dared to try such a trick.

In spite of all obstacles, however, with the help of the Cardinal, new laws were finally passed for the Indies. By these laws the Spaniards were forbidden to divide the Indians among themselves and force them to work without reward.

But the passing of the laws was only a part of the business. It was as true then as now that good laws are of little use unless there be wise and good men to enforce them; and the question now arose as to who should go out and put a stop to the evil system that had caused so much misery to these innocent and helpless people, and see that the new laws were obeyed. In those days the Church had great power over both rulers and people, and so it was not so strange as it would be in these days that the choice should have fallen on three monks of the order of St. Jerome. It was anything but a wise choice, however, for although these monks were good men, they were unused to any life but that of the convent, had had no experience in statesmanship and were, besides, rather timid of spirit. Before they sailed, the enemies of Las Casas filled their minds with distrust of him, and made them think that things in the islands were not as he had represented, so that they did not seem likely to do much good in their new office.

However, the little company set sail at last, the three monks in one ship, Las Casas,—who had been given the official title of "Protector of the Indians," with charge and authority to look after all that concerned them,—in another, and Zuaco, a lawyer, appointed to help and advise them, followed a little later.

CHAPTER V

DISAPPOINTMENTS

"The best laid plans o' mice and men gang aft agley." So it was in this case.

When the Jeronimite fathers arrived in Hispaniola they failed to do what was expected of them. They did *something,* it is true; for they took from those officers of the court, who were not living in the Indies, all their Indian slaves and tried to give them to others who would treat them kindly; but they did not set them free, neither did they bring the judges to trial for their evil deeds.

The clerico was of course very indignant with them, and we may be sure that he never gave them any peace, so that they must have learned to dread the very sight of him. He preached constantly, in the pulpit and on the streets, wherever he went, that the Indians must be free; and when Zuaco came, the two brought charges against the judges, causing them to be tried; but we do not know whether or not they were punished. Probably not.

We must not be too hard upon the monks, however. It was no easy task they had been

asked to perform. What Las Casas wanted them to do, and what the law required also, was to take away all the Indians from the Spaniards and set them free. This meant to ruin the owners, since all they had came through the forced labor of the natives. The monks were not men of the determined character necessary for such an act, nor were they endowed with the courage to face the storm it would have brought about their ears. Few men are like the clerico, who was afraid of nobody.

Just after Las Casas reached the Indies a man named Juan Bono, a shipmaster, arrived there with a shipload of Indians, whom he had kidnaped in the island of Trinidad. He himself told the clerico how it was done.

He had gone to the island with sixty men and told the Indians that they had come to live with them. The Indians received them kindly, brought them food, and, as Bono said himself, treated them like brothers. Bono told them that the white men would like a large house to live in, and the Indians at once went to work to build it for them. When it was nearly done, Bono invited all the natives to come and see it.

Some four hundred of them came, all unarmed and quite unsuspecting and happy. When all were gathered in the house, the Spaniards surrounded it, and Bono told the Indians that they must give themselves up or they would be killed. Some of them tried to

run away, some to resist, and in a few minutes the swords of the Spaniards had filled the place with the dead and dying. One hundred and eighty of them were put in chains and taken to the ship. About a hundred shut themselves up in another house and tried to defend themselves there, but the Spaniards set fire to it and the natives were all burned alive.

This was the return Bono and his men made to the innocent, gentle Indians, who had been so kind to them. No wonder the heart of the clerico was on fire with indignation when he heard the story. He went at once to the three fathers and told them the dreadful tale. They listened, but did nothing,—as usual. Not one of the one hundred and eighty kidnaped Indians was set free, and neither Bono nor any of the judges who had sent him was punished.

One day a priest came to the Protector of the Indians to tell him how the native laborers in the mines near San Domingo were abused. He said he had seen them lying in the fields, sick from overwork, covered with flies, and nobody cared enough to give them food or drink; but their owners allowed them to lie there and die in this way. Las Casas took him by the hand and led him to the fathers, to whom he repeated this story; but they only tried to excuse the cruelty of the mine owners.

The heart of the clerico burned within him as he saw so much suffering and misery about

him and could not get the three commissioners to put a stop to it. Something, he felt, must be done. The fathers had now been in the islands six months and things were no better than they had been before their coming; so he resolved to go again to Spain and seek a remedy for this state of things. When the fathers heard what he intended to do they were much alarmed, but as they could not stop him, they sent one of their number to Spain also, to speak on their behalf.

For some time there had been on the island of Hispaniola a number of Franciscans,—or "Gray Friars," as they were sometimes called because of the color of their robes, just as the Dominicans were called "Black Friars," because they wore black and white. Both orders were sworn to poverty, and both did splendid missionary work in their day. The Franciscans had not always been in sympathy with Las Casas, but seem now to have been as anxious as he to have something done to set matters right. Some of them were well known to the Grand Chancellor, and they gave the clerico letters to that official, who was at once interested; and as Las Casas came to see more of him, the two became great friends. The Chancellor spoke to the King about the matter, and the King commanded that he and Las Casas should consult together and find a remedy for the evils of the Indies.

The plan that they proposed was this:

That colonists should be sent out at the expense of the King and be cared for until they should be able to manage for themselves, when they should begin to pay tribute to the crown. In order to supply laborers, Las Casas suggested that each Spaniard should have permission to import twelve negro slaves. This he did because the Indians died by hundreds from the hard labor in the mines, while he had observed that the negroes endured it much better. Afterward Las Casas confessed with sorrow that he had done wrong in this, as it was no more right to hold the negroes in slavery than to so treat the Indians.

The Bishop of Burgos, who was, you will remember, always bent on opposing the clerico in everything he undertook, laughed at this plan. He said he had been trying for years to get men to go out to the Indies and could not find twenty that were willing to venture. However, Las Casas was not stopped by this, and set to work at once to see what he could do. A man named Berrio was appointed to go with him and assist him; but this Berrio turned out to be anything but a help, refusing to obey the clerico's orders, and finally leaving him, without permission.

Berrio got together about two hundred vagabonds, not at all the right sort of people for colonists, and sent them to Seville, to be shipped

to the Indies. Las Casas was not informed of the matter, and as no one had any instructions with regard to these colonists, they were sent out with no supplies for their necessities. When Las Casas heard of it, he insisted upon having provisions sent after them; but it was too late to benefit many of them, for numbers had died of the hardships suffered, and those who lived and stayed in the Indies proved a very bad addition to the white population.

Meanwhile, the Grand Chancellor had died, and Bishop Fonseca was again at the head of Indian affairs, much to the clerico's grief. Fonseca refused to do anything at all for the colonists, and as Las Casas would not allow them to go under such conditions of neglect, the plan fell through. But no sooner was he defeated in one scheme than he immediately began to devise another. There was no such thing as discouraging Las Casas.

CHAPTER VI

THE KNIGHTS OF THE GOLDEN SPUR

THERE had been for some time both Franciscan monks and Dominican fathers on the mainland of South America, working among the natives. Pedro de Cordova, the head of the Dominicans in the Indies, wrote to Las Casas at about this time, asking him to get the King to grant a certain territory on the mainland, where no white men except the Dominicans and Franciscans should be allowed to go; or, if he could not get it on the mainland, to try to secure some small nearby islands, saying that if the King would not do this it would be necessary to recall all the brethren of the Dominican order, as it was of no use for them to preach to the Indians when they saw all about them the Christians behaving as they did. Now when the clerico had spoken to Fonseca about this, the reply had been that there was no money in it for the King, so that Las Casas saw that if he was to get the grant, he must find a way to make it profitable to the King and his ministers.

The Good Book says that "the love of money

is the root of all evil," and certainly Las Casas was inclined to believe this as he thought of what wickedness it had led the Spaniards into in the New World. No wonder the Indians thought that gold was the white man's god. The clerico tells us of a certain Indian chief, who had fled before the Spaniards from Hispaniola to Cuba, and who, hearing that the Christians were coming there also, called his people together and told them that the reason why the Spaniards treated them so cruelly was because they had a god whom they greatly loved and adored, and it was to make them also love and serve him that they killed and enslaved them. He had a basket of jewels and gold near him. Holding it up, he said that *this* was the god of the Christians and called upon his people to dance before this god and worship him, and perhaps he would not allow the Spaniards to harm them.

Poor old chief! Driven from one hiding place to another, he was taken at last; and because he had tried to escape his oppressors and defend his people, he was condemned to be burned alive. When he was tied to the stake a Franciscan priest came up to him and told him that, although there was but little time, yet if he would believe the Christian faith and be baptized he would be saved. He then told him as much as he could of God and of His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, and, having finished, asked

him if he would believe and go to Heaven, where he would be happy evermore, saying that if he did not he would go to Hell. The chief thought for a moment and then asked if the Christians went to Heaven. The priest replied that those that were good did. The chief at once answered that in that case he did not wish to go to Heaven, where he would have these cruel people again; he would go to Hell.

Las Casas had learned by this time that the desire for wealth must be considered in any plan that he might make if he wanted it to succeed, and he believed he knew of a way by which he could satisfy the King and at the same time carry out his design of converting the Indians by kindness. He thought he could find fifty men who would make the conversion and civilization of the Indians their first object. These fifty were to wear white dresses, with red crosses, so that the Indians would know them from other Spaniards. They were to teach the natives and protect them from all who would harm them. Each one was to contribute a certain sum of money, which was to be used to pay the expenses of the enterprise. For themselves, they were to have a fixed amount of the revenue and certain privileges, and they were to be called the Knights of the Golden Spur. The King was to have, after the first three years, a tribute, which would be increased year by year for ten years, and the Knights were to found three settle-

ments in five years, were to build a fort in each, and were to explore the country for the King. He asked also that those Indians that had been taken away from this part of the country should be sent back to their homes.

The Grand Chancellor thought very well of this plan, and told the clerico to lay it before the Council of the Indies. Of course their bishop, Fonseca, was against it. The plan was not absolutely prohibited, however, but they delayed doing anything about it, until the clerico was nearly driven wild with anxiety and disappointment.

It was the custom in those days to have certain of the clergy appointed preachers to the King. There were eight such preachers at the court of Spain. Las Casas thought perhaps these priests might do something to help, so he went to them and interested them in the scheme. They tried to do what they could, and even went one day before the Council of the Indies,—much to the astonishment of its members,—and having been given permission to speak, made a strong plea for the freedom of the Indies. But though they were listened to with courtesy, nothing came of it.

For months Las Casas fought for this plan of his, which he felt would save at least some of the native people. They had been killed off by thousands on all the islands, and would soon perish on the mainland,—indeed, wherever the

Spaniards went,—unless they could be made free. His enemies fought against his plan and against him, accusing him of everything, even of desiring to get the grant of territory for his own profit. Even his friends sometimes misunderstood him. One of them, a young lawyer, when he heard of rents to be paid to the King and of honors to be given to the Knights of the Golden Spur, said that this "scandalized" him, for it showed a desire for temporal things, which he had never suspected in the clerico. Las Casas, having heard of this, went to him one day and said:

"Señor, if you were to see our Lord Jesus Christ ill-treated and afflicted, would you not implore with all your might that those who had Him in their power would give Him to you, that you might serve and worship Him?"

"Yes," replied his friend.

"Then, if they would not give Him to you, but would sell Him, would you redeem Him?"

"Without a doubt."

"Well, then, Señor, that is what I have done," replied Las Casas; "for I have left in the Indies Jesus Christ, our Lord, suffering stripes and afflictions and crucifixion, not once but thousands of times, at the hands of the Spaniards, who destroy and desolate these Indian nations."

He then went on to tell his friend that, seeing that his opponents would *sell* him the Gospel,

he had offered these inducements, buying the right to teach the Indians to serve and love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Las Casas had now spent altogether four or five years at the court of Spain, trying to get something done for his Indians. He had spent also every cent of money he possessed, and endured every kind of opposition and abuse; but at last the papers were signed. The grant was now assured, though not so much land had been given as had been asked. A company of laborers was ready to go out with the clerico, and money had been loaned him for the expenses of the undertaking. Many little articles, also, were presented to him, to be used as gifts to the natives; and away he sailed to start the new work and to find in the Indies, he hoped, the fifty Knights of the Golden Spur. We shall see how he succeeded.

CHAPTER VII

THE PEARL COAST

If you look on the map of South America, you will see up in the northeast corner the island of Trinidad, and close by, indenting the coast of the mainland, the Gulf of Para. Stretching west from about this point was what was called the Pearl Coast, and it was in this region that was situated the land that had been granted to Las Casas for his company of the Knights of the Golden Spur. Now while he was in Spain events had taken place in this territory that made the founding of a colony very difficult indeed.

Both the Franciscans and the Dominicans had been trying to do missionary work among the natives, as we know, and both orders had monasteries there. For a time all went well, until a Spaniard named Ojeda, engaged in the pearl fishery, had come over from the island of Cubagua, seeking slaves.

This pearl fishing was carried on by use of the Indians in a most heartless manner. The poor creatures were kept swimming about under water from early morning until sunset.

When they came up with their nets, in which they put the oysters,—from the shells of which the pearls were taken,—if they stopped to rest, a man in a boat, who kept rowing about all day for this purpose, drove them in again with blows, sometimes seizing them by the hair and throwing them in. They were half starved, their only food being the oysters or fish and a very little bread. At night they were put in the stocks to prevent them from running away. The consequence of such treatment was that they did not live long, and it was necessary to supply the places of those that died with others. For this reason slave raids were very frequent.

This Ojeda, then, came over to the mainland to get more slaves, and carried off a large number of the Indians. Of course this made the natives very angry and they resolved to kill him and the white men with him.

Because Ojeda had stopped at the Dominican convent the natives supposed that the monks were his friends. And when the slave hunter came ashore again a few days afterward the infuriated Indians killed him and his men, and a week later they attacked the convent and killed the monks also.

When the news of this revolt of the natives was heard at San Domingo, the officers of the colony resolved to send an expedition to avenge the murder of the Dominicans, and a captain, named Ocampo, was placed in command of it.

This force started at once, and had reached Porto Rico when Las Casas and his laborers landed. Perhaps you can imagine how the clerico felt when he knew that Ocampo and his soldiers were going to the very country that had been granted to him for his settlement and were to punish the Indians there, where he had hoped to set up a sort of city of refuge for them. He hurried to show Ocampo his papers ordering that no one should go to that part of the country except Las Casas and the monks, and that the natives were to be in his care and not enslaved.

But although the papers had the royal signature, Ocampo declared that he had had his orders from the officers of the colony at San Domingo, and that he must carry them out; that they would protect him if he was doing anything illegal. In vain did Las Casas storm and plead. It was all of no use. It seemed to him that there was nothing to be done but to go to San Domingo at once and get the officers to recall Ocampo. So he distributed his laborers by twos and threes among the citizens of Porto Rico, and hurried away.

Nobody in San Domingo was glad to see the clerico except his friends the Dominicans. All others were angry with him for what he had been doing at the Spanish court to obtain the freedom of the Indians. They knew, however, that Las Casas was in great favor with the

King and his ministers, and so they were afraid to oppose him openly or to defy the royal authority; but they did everything they could to delay matters. They said they would consider; and they considered so long that it soon became useless to talk about recalling Ocampo, for it was too late to reach him. They discovered, also, another way to prevent Las Casas from going on. They found a ship master, engaged in the slave trade, who was only too glad to help them by declaring the clerico's vessel unseaworthy; and he was not allowed to use it. So there he was, helpless and at his wits' end to know what to do.

Meanwhile, Ocampo had reached the Pearl Coast, decoyed a number of the natives on board, and made slaves of them, hanging their chief at the yardarm. He also captured a great many others. Finally, by means of an Indian woman,—who had been taken from Cubagua to Hispaniola and could speak Spanish, and whom he freed for the purpose,—he made peace with the remaining Indians, and began to build a town.

The slaves Ocampo had captured were brought to San Domingo and sold under the clerico's very eyes; nor could he do anything to prevent it, although, as he tells us himself, he "went raging."

He became so angry now, however, that the authorities thought they had better do some-

thing to make peace with him. He declared he would go to Spain and tell the King how little attention they paid to the royal commands, and would have them all punished. They knew he was very likely to do just what he said and so at last they went to him with a plan which they hoped would pacify him. They wanted to go with him as partners. That is, they wished to form a company to go and settle the land, all of them contributing toward the expenses and all sharing in the profits. This was a long way from being the sort of colony Las Casas had meant to found; for these men did not care at all for the good of the Indians; all any of them wanted was to make money; but he had not found any men to become Knights of the Golden Spur, and unless he went in this way it looked as if he could not go at all, so he consented.

They fitted out two ships for him, and at last he sailed, stopping at Porto Rico to take on his laborers. But here he had another disappointment: not one of them could be found. They had grown tired of waiting, had heard such stories of the riches to be gained by mining or engaging in the slave trade that they had every one gone off either pirating or chasing Indians or something else equally bad; and Las Casas had to go on without them.

When at length Las Casas reached the land where he had hoped to do such great things for the natives, the Franciscans came joyfully to

meet him, chanting *Te Deums*. Now, they felt, they had a friend and protector. They took him into their little convent,—which was only of wood, thatched with straw,—and into their little garden, where they had orange trees, vines, and melons, and there they talked together of what they should do.

Las Casas built a large storehouse for his goods, and sent word to all the Indians in that part of the country that he had been sent out by the new King of Spain, and that he was their friend and would protect them. They should not be ill-treated any more. He sent presents to them to show that he wished to be friends with them.

Ocampo and his men had had such a hard time that they were not willing to stay there, and all sailed away, leaving Las Casas with only a few servants and one or two helpers. It was not much like the way he had expected to begin his famous settlement. If it had not been for the Franciscans, he would have been lonely indeed.

All might yet have gone well if it had not been for the Spaniards on the island of Cubagua. They had no good water on that island, and this made an excuse for coming to the mainland very often. They brought liquor with them, which made the Indians drunk and unmanageable, and they taught them many evil ways. This was a great perplexity to Las Casas

and the good monks. All the good they tried to do, all their teachings of the Christian religion, were made of little use by the evil example of these wicked men. Las Casas thought that perhaps if he had a fort at the mouth of the river, he could mount the guns he had brought with him and keep the unruly people in order. So he hired a mason to build one; but the people on Cubagua found out what was going on and bribed the man to stop work and come away, leaving the fort unfinished.

Things grew worse and worse, and all felt that something must be done. The head of the Franciscans kept urging Las Casas to go to San Domingo and get the officers there to help them. The clerico knew it was of no use at all to appeal to those men, who had already hindered him so greatly in his plans for the good of the Indians; therefore, for a long time he refused to go. Finally, however, not wishing to be obstinate, he agreed to do so, against his better judgment.

He appointed one of his men, Francisco de Soto, to take charge in his absence, instructing him particularly not to let both of their boats leave the settlement at the same time, as, if trouble arose with the Indians, these boats might be their only means of escape. This man, either because of stupidity or rebellion, did the very thing he had been told not to. As soon as the clerico's back was turned he sent one boat

off one way and the other another; and sorry enough he must have been for it before long, for trouble came almost at once.

The pearl fishers of Cubagua had not ceased to molest the Indians, and it was hardly two weeks after Las Casas had sailed before the Franciscans detected signs of danger. The woman who had been used by Ocampo to make peace with the natives was still there, and the fathers asked her whether they were right in thinking that the Indians were planning to attack them. The woman, by name Maria, said "No" with her lips, because other Indians were near, but "Yes" with her eyes. The monks and the clerico's servants were very much alarmed, and a ship touching on that coast for some reason, they begged the captain to take them on board; but he refused, and they were left to their fate.

In the settlement great anxiety and terror reigned. The white men tried to find out what day had been set for the attack, and at last heard that it was to take place the next day. They began to fortify the monastery and the storehouse, and set up twelve or fourteen guns that they had; but discovered that their powder was damp. We wonder how they could have been so careless as to allow it to be in this state, when they had known for some time that trouble was likely to occur. Now, however, they took it out to dry it in the sun, as soon as it rose. They

were too late, however; for the Indians came upon them with a rush, and they fled for the monastery building. A few of the clerico's servants were killed, but the rest of them and the fathers reached the shelter of the monastery. The Indians, however, set it on fire.

There was a door into the garden, at the rear, and a tall fence of cane hid it from the view of the Indians. The refugees ran out of this door into the garden and through another door out to the creek that ran nearby, where the monks had a boat of their own, which would hold fifty persons. All got in except one lay brother, who at the first alarm had fled and was hidden in a thicket of cane. He now appeared, high up on the bank, and the boatmen tried hard to reach him; but the current was too strong; all their exertions failed to bring the boat near enough to him. Seeing that all would be lost if they did not cease their attempt to save him, the brother signed to them not to make further effort; and they were obliged to leave him to his fate. Poor fellow! He was killed almost at once.

The Indians were not long in seeing that their victims were escaping, and hurried after them in a much lighter boat, so that they gained on the fugitives with every stroke. The Spaniards were obliged to drive their boat to land and hide in a thicket of cactus. Only those in fear of death could have forced their way into

such a thicket. The Indians, with their naked bodies, could not push through the thorns, and the fleeing men therefore escaped and made their way to their countrymen's ships, thus getting in safety to San Domingo. De Soto, however, died before their arrival. He had been shot with a poisoned arrow while running to the monastery for shelter.

All this happened within two months after Las Casas' departure. He, meanwhile, through the ignorance of the sailors, had been carried a long way past San Domingo, and for all this time had been beating about with contrary winds, finally landing on another part of the island, whence he was obliged to proceed on foot.

He was traveling with a party of persons also bound for San Domingo, and one day at noon, as they drew near the city, while they were all resting in the shade of the trees, some people came up with them and told them that the news had reached the city that the Indians of the Pearl Coast had killed the clerico, Bartholomé Las Casas, and all his household. Those who were traveling with Las Casas denied this, saying that he was with them; and while they were disputing he awoke and heard what they said.

Although he thought it might not be as bad as it was represented, he knew that something terrible must have happened to his little colony,

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and went on at once in great anxiety to find how much of the news was true. A short distance out some of his friends met him. Having heard that he was on the road, they had come to try and comfort him and to offer him money to start another colony. But at last the brave spirit gave way. He could not rally at once from such a grief, and he went, broken-hearted, to his friends the Dominicans, to hide his sorrows within the walls of their monastery.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CLOISTER

Day after day Bartholomé Las Casas sat in the garden of the Dominican monastery at San Domingo, sad and dejected. As he thought of his years of struggle and realized with bitter grief that he had nothing to show for it all, doubts assailed him, and he accused himself of having rashly undertaken work to which he had not been called. He might, indeed, have gone to Spain again and received help to carry out his plans; but he had not the courage. His heart was like water within him.

Nor was he encouraged to go on by his friends the monks. They greatly desired to have him among their number, and urged him strongly to give up the fight and enter the brotherhood, —which last he did. The Dominicans rejoiced greatly as did his enemies in the colonies, for they thought they were surely now rid of the man who had caused them so much trouble. And so they were,—for a time.

Seven or eight years went by, and Bartholomé Las Casas was seldom heard of outside the convent walls. He was not even allowed to preach for five years, but during this time

of seclusion he was recovering his strength of body and soul for the work of the future; and though he was silent, he did not forget, for a part of the time he was at work on his "History of the Indies," in which he related the cruelties that had been inflicted upon the natives.

At length an event occurred that brought the Protector of the Indians again before the public. The Franciscan monks had educated in their convent a young Indian chief, Enrique by name. This young man had married a beautiful Indian girl and he and the Indians under him had been assigned to a certain Spaniard, as was the custom. This Spanish master took from Enrique first a fine horse and then his young wife. When the Indian complained of this ill-usage he was severely whipped. He then appealed to the authorities, only to receive threats of worse treatment. Seeing that no help was to be got from any one, he gathered his Indians together in the mountains, and managed to collect a quantity of lances and swords and to drill his people in the use of them, so that they held their ground against the troops sent to subdue them.

One of his old teachers from the Franciscan convent went to him to try and persuade him to lay down his arms; but without success. At length a new bishop of San Domingo was sent out, who was also president of the *Audiencia,*

the governing body of the Indies. He had received instructions to subdue this rebellious chief, and after trying in vain to accomplish it, bethought himself of Las Casas, for whom he sent.

Las Casas at once agreed to go and see what he could do, and set off alone into the mountains. When he had been gone several months, the president and council began to feel alarm for his safety; but one day who should appear in the streets of San Domingo but Las Casas himself, leading the rebellious chief by the hand. Great was the wonder and delight of all. He had promised Enrique that if he would submit to Spanish rule and pay tribute, as did all Spanish subjects, neither he nor his Indians should be punished, nor should they ever again be made slaves. This promise was faithfully kept, and Enrique was ever after a loyal subject.

During the eight years that Las Casas had spent in the convent, many important events had taken place in the New World. Cortez had conquered Mexico, Alvarado had conquered Guatemala, Pedrarias had overrun and laid waste Nicaragua, and Pizarro had commenced his conquest of Peru.

About 1528 Las Casas went once more to Spain, to obtain a decree from the King which should prevent the Indians of Peru from being enslaved. While there he preached several

times at court, with the old fiery zeal and eloquence. He obtained the royal order and returned with it to Hispaniola. A new prior was about to be sent to the monastery of San Domingo, in Mexico, and with him went Las Casas, intending to go on to Peru, with some brothers of the order, not only to make known the royal commands with regard to the Indians but to found convents in that country. However, this turned out to be impracticable, and after a short stay the party returned to Nicaragua.

King Charles had desired the Bishop of Nicaragua to establish monasteries in his diocese. The arrival of Las Casas and his two companions presenting the opportunity of carrying out the King's wish, the bishop begged them to stay with him, and they consented, and began at once to learn the language of the country.

But Las Casas got into difficulties with the governor by stirring up a formidable opposition to him and preventing him from undertaking an expedition into the interior, which he desired to make. The clerico had good reason for this course, for the most outrageous cruelties had been practiced against the Indians in that province, and he tells us that it had been known to happen that when a body of four thousand Indians had gone with such an expedition to carry burdens, but six returned alive, and that often when an Indian was sick or overcome with weariness and want of food, and could not

go on, in order to get the chain free (for they went chained together), his head was cut off and his body thrown aside, without the necessity of stopping the train.

About this time the Bishop of Nicaragua died, and the Bishop of Guatemala urged Las Casas to come into his diocese, as he had only one priest to help him. The feud with the governor having become more violent than ever, it seemed wise to accept this invitation. Therefore, abandoning the convent he had established, Las Casas with all his brethren went into Guatemala, making their home for a time at Santiago, in a convent that had stood vacant for six years.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAND OF WAR

The first thing these four missionaries,—Las Casas, Luis Cancer, Pedro de Angula, and Rodrigo de Larada,—had to do was to learn the language of the country, which was called the Quichi. It was no easy task, for none of them were young,—Las Casas, their prior, being now sixty-one years of age. The Bishop of Guatemala, a great scholar, was their teacher, and day after day this little company of monks might have been seen, sitting with the Bishop, like boys at school, learning conjugations and declensions.

Las Casas was also busy writing a book,—which, however, was never published,—in which he tried to show that the only way to convert men was to convince the mind by reasoning and win the heart by gentleness. The authorities of the province laughed at him and challenged him to try it, by declaring that if he succeeded in subduing any tribe by these methods, they would at once set free their slaves. Las Casas boldly took up the challenge and selected for

the trial a part of the country called "The Land of War."[1]

Alvarado had carried on a terrible war in Guatemala. Thousands of Indians had been killed, tortured, and made slaves. The people of the district where Las Casas intended to try his experiment were a hardy, warlike race, and their country was a land of steep mountains, deep ravines, and many furious mountain torrents. They had fought desperately for their liberty. Three times the Spaniards had attempted to conquer them, and each time had been driven back. They were a terror to the white men, and not a Spaniard dared to go near them. It was rightly named The Land of War. Yet it was these turbulent, unconquerable people whom Las Casas now declared he would Christianize and make subject to Spanish rule. He would take no soldiers with him and would accept no aid of any kind. All that he asked was that when his work should be accomplished, they might be left free, only paying tribute, as all subjects did, to the crown. To this the governor of Guatemala agreed.

By this time the fathers could both write and speak the Quichi language well, and they went to work to compose in verse an account of the creation, the fall of man, the birth, life, and miracles of our Lord, and His death upon

[1] "Tierra de Guerra," The Land of War, was located in the present state of Vera Paz, in northern Guatemala.

the cross. These verses they set to music, for the Indians were fond of songs.

There were certain Christian Indians that traded with the people in the Land of War, going to them at regular intervals. The fathers chose some of these traders and taught them the songs. They learned very quickly, and also played an accompaniment on their musical instruments. When they were ready they started, with an assortment of all kinds of articles such as the Indians particularly liked,—knives, scissors, little looking-glasses, and so on.

As they had been instructed, the four peddlers went first to a great native prince. His people all came flocking to buy, and when the business of the day was over, they took pains to win his favor by making him a present.

After supper they took out their musical instruments and began to play and chant the verses they had learned. Hundreds of dusky warriors, attracted by the sweet strains, sat about in the moonlight and listened.

Next night many more natives came, and when the song was ended, the chief asked to have it explained. This was just the opportunity the traders had been waiting for. They told the chief that they sang only what they had heard, and that only the *padres* could explain the verses.

"Who are the *padres?*" asked the chief. In answer to this question, they told him they were

men who dressed always in white and black, wore their hair like a garland about the head, did not eat meat, never married, did not seek for gold, and sang the praises of God day and night.

The chief was much struck by this description, especially by the fact that the *padres* did not seek gold, his experience with Spaniards being that they loved gold above everything else in the world, and that all the miseries the Indians had suffered at their hands had been caused by their insane desire to possess it.

At last, though it was a difficult matter to persuade these Indians to allow any Spaniard to enter their country, they decided to send the young brother of the chief out with the traders, and if he should find these *padres* all that had been represented, he was to invite them to come and tell them of their religion.

Great was the joy in the little convent when they saw the prince coming with the Indian traders. They did their best to make him welcome, and after a few days, when he was ready to return, Father Luis Cancer was sent with him.

What was the good father's astonishment to find crowds of people coming to meet him, arches erected for him to pass under, and the roads swept before his feet!

The Indians built a church for him at once,—made of the trunks of trees, roofed with pal-

metto leaves,—and all came, wondering and admiring, to see what he would do.

Faithfully he taught them, until the chief accepted Christianity, with his own hands overthrew their idols, and was baptized and given the name of Don Juan. His people soon followed his example.

Father Luis also visited other parts of the country, and when he returned, after several months, to his companions there was great rejoicing over the results of his labors.

Las Casas himself now went into The Land of War, taking with him Father Pedro de Angula. Just as they reached Don Juan's town the young prince, his brother, came home from the neighboring district of Coban, bringing with him his bride, a princess of that tribe. With him were a number of the Coban princes. There were great festivities for many days, but in the midst of the rejoicing the Coban princes, angry that the bridegroom's family and tribe had become Christians, secretly stirred up some of the people to burn the church, managing carefully to conceal their own share in the matter. Don Juan at once rebuilt the edifice, however, and no other unpleasant incident occurred during the whole stay of the Spaniards in the country.

While in The Land of War Las Casas went further north, and whenever he returned was always welcomed. As the people became Chris-

tian, he realized that in order to teach them, it would be necessary to get them together in towns, where many could be reached by one man. After much difficulty, this was accomplished and several such towns were built, Don Juan's town being called Rabinal.

After a time Las Casas sent for Luis Cancer, who when he came brought with him a contract, signed by the governor, securing the practical independence of the Indians of The Land of War.

Word now reached Las Casas that both the Bishop of Guatemala and Alvarado had come to Santiago, and he resolved to go down and meet them. He wished Don Juan to accompany him, and this the chief was quite willing to do, but wanted to take something like an army with him, and was with difficulty persuaded to have only such a retinue as would serve to show his rank and importance.

Father Ladrada, the only monk left at the convent, on being notified that all these visitors were coming, built more huts, put up tents, and laid in a store of provisions for their entertainment. Immediately upon their arrival, the Bishop came to the monastery and had a long conversation with the prince. So much struck was he with the Indian's knowledge of the Christian faith, and with his dignity and intelligence, that he asked Alvarado to come and see him also. Although this great captain held the

life of an Indian of no more worth than that of a dog, yet he was so pleased with the prince, that wanting to make him a present, but having nothing with him for that purpose, he took off his own red velvet cap and placed it upon Don Juan's head.

They took their distinguished visitor about the town, having first asked the merchants to make their shops as attractive as possible and, if the prince expressed a fancy for any article, to let him have it and send the bill to the Bishop. Don Juan, however, preserved his Indian stolidity, viewing the displays with perfect gravity, and neither showing surprise nor expressing admiration. Only once did he remark upon anything that he saw. He asked about a picture of the Virgin Mary, which was displayed in one of the shops, and when it was offered to him accepted it, afterwards placing it in his chapel at Rabinal.

Las Casas and Father Ladrada went back with Don Juan, intending to go further north into the district of Coban for the purpose of establishing there a permanent mission among the natives.

In 1538 the Bishop of Guatemala sent for all the Dominicans, to consult with him about securing more workers. At this council it was decided to send Las Casas to Spain to plead for more Dominicans and Franciscans to come out. He took with him Father Ladrada and Father

Luis Cancer, whose Indian converts were greatly grieved to part with them; but the clerico comforted them with the promise of a speedy return.

CHAPTER X

BISHOP OF CHIAPA

Charles V was in Germany when the little company arrived in Madrid, but Las Casas found many old friends, and at once set about his business with his usual zeal and energy. When he was not preaching, interviewing officials, traveling, or busy in some way about matters concerning his beloved Indians, he was writing a book, "The Destruction of the Indies," which, however, was not published until twelve years afterward.

The clerico's old opponent, Bishop Fonseca, was dead, and there was now a much better spirit in the council, so that it proved easier than ever before for him to secure the legislation he desired. The Pope had also recently issued a Bull forbidding all good Catholic subjects to make slaves of the Indians, and this was a great help to Las Casas. Some new laws were passed for their benefit, among them one that forbade any lay Spaniards to enter The Land of War for five years. This royal order was solemnly proclaimed, at Las Casas' request, from the steps of the cathedral of Seville.

And now, his business being finished and the Franciscan and Dominican monks he had procured for Guatemala being ready to sail, Las Casas prepared to start back to the New World; but at the last moment he was detained by the president of the Council of the Indies, who needed the clerico's advice. The Dominicans were kept back with him, as he was their vicar-general, but the Franciscans went, and with them Father Luis Cancer, taking with him a copy of the new laws. These laws were a great triumph for Las Casas, and their acceptance was due to his wonderful personal influence.

The clerico was now seventy years old. He had crossed the ocean twelve times. Four times he had gone to Germany to see the Emperor, and we must remember that traveling then was a much more difficult and unpleasant experience than anything we can conceive of now. In his case poverty made it still more of a hardship. But none of these things mattered to this earnest "apostle" if only he could lighten the hard lot of those for whom he labored and suffered.

One Sunday evening, while he was in Barcelona, the Emperor's secretary called on him to tell him that it was the royal wish to make him Bishop of Cuzco, the largest and richest of all the dioceses in the New World. But Las Casas would accept no reward for his work, and for fear he should be urged, he left Barcelona. Not

long after, however, the diocese of Chiapa[1] was established, and the bishop appointed to it having died on his way out, this bishopric was offered to Las Casas. In contrast with the bishopric of Cuzco, it was the *poorest* in the New World,—so poor indeed that the Emperor had to help out the salary of the bishop with a royal grant. Such a field, however, appealed far more to the Protector of the Indians than the former one, and he accepted the offer and was consecrated in Seville on the 8th of March, 1544, and at once prepared to leave, taking with him forty-four Dominicans. The voyage proved to be a very trying and dangerous one, but at length the holy men arrived at San Domingo. The Dominicans came to meet the Bishop and his companions and escorted them to the monastery, and the *Te Deum* was sung in the church, in thanksgiving for their escape from so many perils.

Hardly any in San Domingo, except the Dominicans, were glad to see the protector of the Indians. The new laws were regarded as the ruin of the colonies. Indignation meetings were held, and it was determined to boycott the monks. This was a very serious calamity to the Dominicans, for as they, like the Franciscans, belonged to what were known as the mendicant

[1] Chiapa, the diocese of Las Casas, is now the Mexican State of Chiapas, the southernmost State of Mexico, bordering on the present Republic of Guatemala.

orders, and depended for their daily bread upon what they could beg, they were reduced to extremity.

Prayer was offered in the church night and day, and very soon the Franciscans began secretly to send the Dominicans food from what they themselves received, and an old negro woman offered to make a round every day of the houses where there were people that did not share the evil spirit of the rest of the town, and so their necessity was relieved.

In spite of this condition of things, Las Casas went before the *Audiencia,* and in the name of the King, summoned them to set free the Indians. But Spanish subjects had a right to protest against any new laws if they so desired, and when this was done, the laws were not enforced until the protest had been either accepted or rejected.

Meanwhile, Las Casas himself wrote to the Emperor, and both he and others of the Dominicans preached constantly against slavery and the wrongs done the Indians. Naturally, these sermons increased the hatred against them. In the midst of these troubles, however, the friars were astonished and delighted to receive a visit one day from a rich widow, said to be the richest person in the colony, who came to tell them that their sermons had convinced her that it was a sin to hold the Indians in bondage, and she had resolved to free hers (she had

more than two hundred); and because she now felt that her money had been made wrongly, she was about to make over her plantation to the order. This caused a great sensation in the town. Then, too, seeing the Dominicans holding to their convictions, directly against their own interests, after a time made many people rather ashamed of themselves, and little by little the hostility died away, so that when the time came for Las Casas and his monks to leave, some of the Spaniards even expressed regret.

They sailed early in December, and this voyage also proved a trying one. It was very stormy, and their pilot turned out to be so ignorant that the Bishop himself had to take the wheel; for this truly wonderful man could sail a ship, work a plantation, write books, plead a case in court, perform the duties of a bishop, and at the same time fight unceasingly for the oppressed.

The returning Dominicans had a terrible trip, and it was January before they landed at the port of Lazaro, in his own diocese. The Spaniards and the Christian Indians came out at once to the ship to greet the Bishop. It must have been a queer crowd: Proud, stately Spaniards, in velvets and laces; blanketed Indians, silent and stolid; naked heathens, eager to see the man whom they knew as their protector! But Las Casas was glad to see them all, and

leaving the ship, they all went up together to the church, where after the service the Spaniards came to kiss the episcopal ring, and after them the Indians.

At first the Bishop was received with politeness and apparent kindness, but in spite of this all the Spaniards were resolved to resist the new laws and not to acknowledge Las Casas as their Bishop nor pay him their tithes. This was very awkward, for Las Casas found himself thus unable to pay the captain of the ship in which he and the monks had come, but the friars sold a part of the goods they had brought with them, the parish priest loaned the Bishop some money, and he gave his note for the rest. So that difficulty was settled.

Their troubles had only begun, however. It was not a great distance to Ciudad Real, where they wished to go, but it was impossible to carry their provisions and the equipment for the church by land, so they loaded their baggage on an old, flat-bottomed boat, to go by sea; and twelve of the fathers, with a number of others, went in it. Two days later the Bishop and the rest were ready to sail on a faster boat; but just as they were about to embark, word came that the other boat had been wrecked and nine of the fathers and twenty-seven laymen drowned. Those who had been saved were staying in an Indian village near the shore, and everything they possessed had been lost.

The remaining monks were so alarmed that at first they refused to go by sea, but Las Casas finally persuaded them that, as the skies were clear and their boat a strong, new one, they were in no danger, and the party set out. It was a very sad and downcast little body of men, however. All one night and day they sat, without eating or speaking. When they reached the place where the other boat had been wrecked, the captain pointed out the spot, and the Bishop recited the prayers for the dead. Then he ordered food to be prepared, called them all to come to the table, and set the example by himself eating and talking cheerfully all the time, until his companions' courage was restored.

A gale coming up, the party took refuge behind an island, where they lay for a long time before they could go on; and then, because some of them were still afraid, they divided into two bodies,—the Bishop, his faithful friend and constant companion, Father Ladrada, and two other monks, remaining on the boat, and the rest proceeding by land.

The town of Chiapa was the Indian town of the diocese; Ciudad Real, the Spanish town. It was to the latter that the Bishop went first. The people received him cordially and showed him every outward form of respect. He found but few priests in the whole diocese, four of them in and about Ciudad Real. Of these, one

was quite young and had no particular charge, one traveled about from one town to another, baptizing the Indians for the money it brought him; one was a partner in a sugar plantation and spent more time attending to this business than to his clerical duties, and another collected from the owners of plantations and slaves taxes and tribute paid to the crown. The Bishop took all these into his house, to keep them in order, paying them a small salary and giving them their meals at his own table.

Las Casas' manner of living as a bishop was no different from that which he had practiced as a simple monk. His habit was rusty and patched and he ate no meat, though it was provided for his guests: his forks and spoons were of wood, and the dishes of plain earthenware. This simple mode of life did not suit the priests, and two of them left his diocese.

All day Las Casas attended to the work of the diocese, and late into the night he studied and wrote. At all times the Indians had free access to him, coming to him with all their sorrows. Every day they would crowd about him, their faces swollen with weeping and, kissing the hem of his robe, would pour out to him the story of the cruelties from which they suffered. The good Bishop suffered with them and often would be heard in the night, sighing and groaning in his room.

Las Casas preached constantly against the

enslaving of the Indians, and rebuked the holders of slaves for their disregard of the new laws. He ordered his clergy to refuse absolution and the sacraments to those who would not obey, which order aroused the anger of the whole community against him. His Dean disobeyed him and sided with the colonists. He was petitioned, threatened, and abused. The children were taught couplets against him, which they sang after him in the street. Some one even discharged a gun into the window of his room one night, to frighten him. All support was withdrawn from the Dominicans, and the Bishop's salary was not paid.

Finally the Bishop arrested the Dean. In those days, when the Roman Church was so powerful, bishops had a kind of episcopal marshal, and usually there was also an episcopal jail, where ecclesiastical offenders were confined. This arrest of the Dean stirred up a great commotion. A crowd of people gathered around him, and he made a frantic effort to escape, crying out:

"Help me! Gentlemen, help me!"

And he voiced all sorts of promises, if they would assist him. The citizens being armed, in a few minutes the Dean was free; whereupon sentinels were set at all the doors of the monastery, to prevent the monks from going to the assistance of their Bishop, and a shouting mob forced its way into his house.

One of the Dominicans and a knight of Salamanca, who chanced to be there, met the riotous crowd and managed to quiet the tumult a little; but the leaders burst into the Bishop's room, shouting at him, insulting him, and even threatening to kill him.

Las Casas spoke not a word, but stood calmly looking at them until the storm had spent itself, when quietly, with words of pity and forgiveness, he dismissed them.

He now excommunicated the Dean. The monks were greatly alarmed for the Bishop's life and begged him to leave and go to some place of safety, but he said to them:

"Fathers, where would you have me go? Where shall I be safe as long as I act in behalf of these poor creatures? Were the cause mine, I would drop it with pleasure, but it is that of my flock, of these miserable Indians, oppressed by unjust slavery."

While they were talking, four other Dominicans rushed in to tell the Bishop that the man who had threatened to kill him,—the one that had fired the shot to frighten him,—had been stabbed. At once Las Casas rose, and sending for a surgeon and taking some of the brothers with him, went to minister to the injured man. For hours they worked over him, the Bishop ministering to him as to a brother; and so touched was the man that he begged Las Casas' forgiveness with all his heart, and was from

that day one of the clerico's warmest friends.

The Bishop's salary was now refused him, all alms withdrawn from the Dominicans, and when Indians were sent out into the province to beg for them, the Spaniards seized whatever was brought in, and gave the bearers a sound beating into the bargain, so that it was impossible to obtain food in this way.

It now became absolutely impossible for the monks to live any longer in Ciudad Real, and it was decided to go to the Indian town of Chiapa and build a convent there; but before leaving the Bishop preached a sermon in which the people were told plainly that it was because of the hardness of their hearts and their sin in persisting to keep the Indians as slaves, after the Dominicans had shown them the evil of it, that the friars were going away.

CHAPTER XI

REVOLT IN CHIAPA

The Bishop and the monks now departed from the Spanish town and took up their residence in Chiapa. Some distance outside the town they found a number of Indians waiting for them, gayly dressed, decorated with golden chains and bracelets, and carrying crosses made of feathers and flowers. As soon as Las Casas was conducted to the house made ready for him, the Indians began to come in from all the country round, begging to be taught the Christian religion. Joy filled the heart of the good Bishop. Such a scene made up for all the torments and insults he had suffered at the hands of his own countrymen.

Happy as he was, however, at this readiness on the natives' part to accept the gospel message, the tales of suffering they poured into his ears wrung his heart. All over the province women were stolen, property taken away, and the helpless Indians bought and sold like cattle, —overworked, beaten and starved, until they died and so, at last, found peace.

The Bishop could not get the new laws en-

forced. No attention was paid either to his entreaties or his threats, so at length,—in June, 1545,—he determined to go to Gracias á Dios, and present the matter to the council governing the country, demanding that they compel obedience to the royal mandate.

He took the road through Guatemala, in order to visit again "The Land of War," now a land of peace. It was a wonderful encouragement to him to find the Indians living peaceful, orderly, Christian lives, unmolested and happy. Great numbers of them came to greet him with tears of joy, and if he had needed any proof of the wisdom of his method of Christianizing the Indians, he found it in the transformation that had taken place all through the district.

To all who came, Las Casas spoke in their own language, giving to them the royal command, signed by the Emperor, that they should never be anything but a free people.

The Bishop of Guatemala went with Las Casas to visit The Land of War, and had intended to go with him to Gracias á Dios, where they were both to assist in the consecration of a new bishop of Nicaragua. Learning, however, that the Protector of the Indians was going principally to insist upon the enforcement of the new laws, and that a letter had been written to Prince Philip, heir to the throne, informing him that he, the Bishop of Guatemala, had many slaves and did not uphold these laws

either in practice or in teaching, he turned back and returned to his own diocese, and from a warm friend he became one of the Bishop's enemies.

The journey to Gracias á Dios was a difficult and dangerous one at that season of the year. All such journeys were of course made on foot, and the streams that had to be crossed were swollen and turbulent from the violent rains, which had also in some cases destroyed the roads; but we never hear that Las Casas in all his life ever once gave up or delayed a trip either because of ill health or dangers in the way. Now, at seventy-one, he had all the endurance and energy of youth.

Immediately upon his arrival he went before the council, but met with nothing but insults. One day as he came in, an officer cried out:

"Put out that fool!"

On another occasion, having been commanded to withdraw, Las Casas refused to do so, and the president ordered him to be removed by force. The Bishop solemnly summoned the judges, in the name of God, to relieve the Indians from oppression and remove the stumbling blocks their tyranny was putting in the way of Christianizing them. At this the chief justice lost his temper and shouted:

"You are a bad man, a cheat, a bad bishop, a shameful fellow, and deserve to be punished!"

Such language used by a Spanish official to-

ward a bishop in those days, when the Roman Catholic Church had so great an influence upon the nation, startled even those most hostile to Las Casas. The chief justice found himself regarded by the whole community as practically excommunicated because of this rash speech, and was obliged to make a sort of half-hearted apology for having so spoken.

Las Casas was not only a Bishop but, by training and experience at the court of Spain, one of the foremost lawyers of his time; and now, seeing that he could obtain nothing from the judges by peaceful means, he instituted legal proceedings against them. This accomplished some good, for an auditor was sent by them to Ciudad Real, to see to the enforcement of the new laws, and the inhabitants of that place were notified of his coming by letter.

When the notice was received, at once the tocsin was rung, and when all the citizens were gathered together, a protest was read, stating that the Bishop had taken possession of his see without showing the papal bulls or the royal decree authorizing him to do so, and declaring that he must cease his innovations and do as other bishops did, if he wanted them to pay their tithes and receive him as their bishop.

The inhabitants stationed a body of Indians on the road by which he was to come, to give notice of the approach of Las Casas, and de-

termined to prevent his entrance into the city by force.

The Bishop had sent on his baggage by Indian couriers, but, receiving word of the hostile attitude of the citizens, he recalled them, and stopped at the Dominican monastery in the town of Copanabastta, to consult with the brethren there.

Meanwhile, a lay brother and a gentleman of the town, who was friendly to the Bishop, had gone to his house and removed his books and household goods to a place of safety. The people hearing of this, a mob attacked them at midnight; but they took refuge in the sacristy of the church, where they could not be reached, and at daybreak escaped and got out of the town.

News of all this was brought to the Bishop, and the Dominicans advised him not to go on, but he said:

"If I do not go to Ciudad Real, I banish myself from my own church, and it will be said of me with reason, 'The wicked flee when no man pursueth.'"

He added:

"The minds of men change from hour to hour. Is it possible that the mercy of God will permit them to commit so horrible a crime as to murder me? If I do not endeavor to enter my church, how can I complain to the Emperor or the Pope that I have been thrust out of it?"

And he finished by saying:

"My good fathers, trusting in the mercy of God and your fervent prayers, I am resolved to proceed on my journey, as no other alternative is left, without my neglecting my duty."

Then, gathering up the folds of his habit, he set out, calm in the midst of the tears and prayers of those about him.

It was sunset when Las Casas started and late at night when he came upon the Indian sentinels. The report had gone out that the Bishop had given up the attempt to enter the town, and the Indians were therefore off their guard and had fallen asleep. Wakened suddenly by the approach of the Bishop, they fell at his feet when he said gently to them:

"Are you ready to destroy your father?"

Distressed at their position, and overjoyed to see him again, the poor creatures knelt before him, begging his forgiveness and pouring out with tears their love for him.

Las Casas was afraid that the Indians would be punished for failing to give notice of his arrival, so, with his own hands he, assisted by one of the fathers, bound them, that it might appear that he had surprised and captured them.

That night there was an earthquake at Ciudad Real, and the citizens said it was because of the Bishop, and that it was only the begin-

ning of the destruction he would bring upon the town.

Entering Ciudad Real about daybreak, Las Casas went immediately to the church and summoned the council to meet him there. They came, followed by all the rest of the citizens, and seated themselves. When the Bishop came in to speak to them, no one rose or showed him any of the usual marks of respect. The notary at once stood up and read the paper the citizens had prepared at the town meeting. The Bishop answered this quietly and courteously, saying that he had no intention of interfering with their property except to prevent sin against God and their neighbor. His gentleness was beginning to make some impression, when one of the council, neither rising nor removing his cap, commenced a violent speech, declaring that the Bishop was but a private individual, and if he wished to speak to them, should have gone to them and not have presumed to summon them to come to him.

Las Casas replied with great dignity:

"Look you, sir; when I wish to ask anything from your estates, I will go to your house and speak to you, but when I have to speak to you concerning God's service and the good of your souls, it is for me to send and call you to come wherever I may be, and if you are Christians you have to come trooping in haste, lest evil fall upon you."

Nobody dared answer this, and the Bishop, rising, immediately withdrew into the sacristy.

There the notary of the council came to him and respectfully presented a petition from the townspeople, asking that they have confessors appointed. The Bishop assented and named two; but these not being acceptable, he chose two others, whose views were not very well known to the people, but whom he knew to be in sympathy with himself. The brother who was with him, not understanding the character of the men he had last appointed and thinking he was yielding to pressure, took hold of his vestments and cried:

"Let your lordship rather die than do this!"

At that a tumult broke out in the church, and the people would have assaulted the speaker, if at that moment two monks of the Order of Mercy had not entered the building and succeeded in getting the Bishop and the offending father out in safety,—taking them to their convent.

Las Casas had walked all night, and the fatigue of the journey and the excitement of this meeting had left him much exhausted, but he was not yet to have rest.

He was seated in his cell, and the monks were giving him some refreshment, when a fearful uproar was heard outside, and the convent was found to be surrounded by armed men. Some of them forced their way into the Bishop's pres-

ence. At first there was such a noise that it was impossible to hear what it was all about, but at last it appeared that it was because the Indian sentinels had been bound and treated as prisoners.

Las Casas at once said that he alone was to blame for this, and explained that it was done for fear they should be suspected of favoring him.

Then a storm of abuse broke out against the Bishop, no feeling of respect for his office nor of consideration for his age restraining them.

Meanwhile, while this was going on within, a scene of violence was taking place in the courtyard. The mob attacked the negro who attended the Bishop in all his travels. This negro was of great stature and the Bishop in jest called him Juanillo (Little John). He had traveled three times across the continent with the Bishop, and always carried him in his arms when fording the swollen streams. Juanillo was wounded with a pike thrust and stretched on the ground. The monks rushed out to help him and two of them,—very strong young men, —succeeded in clearing the courtyard.

All this took place before nine o'clock in the morning. By noon there was a revulsion of feeling,—the minds of the citizens had entirely changed. The members of the council came humbly to the convent, asked the Bishop's pardon on their knees, and kissed his hands. They

then carried him in festive procession to the house of one of the principal citizens, and sent him costly presents. Finally, they arranged a grand tournament in his honor.

It is doubtful if this sudden change in their treatment of him was especially gratifying to the Bishop, as it indicated fickleness and lack of depth in the people he had come to rule. Indeed neither he nor the monks had been in any way misled by this demonstration as to what was likely to happen in the future. While the peace lasted his adherents made haste to send plenty of provisions to the Bishop's house, lest he be starved out when it was over.

Las Casas was now about to go to Mexico, to attend a meeting of all the bishops in the New World, who were to confer concerning all questions concerning the Indians. While he was making his preparations, Juan Rogel,—the auditor appointed by the council at Gracias á Dios to see to the enforcement of the new laws,—arrived. He listened respectfully to all the Bishop had to say, and then advised him to hasten his departure.

"For," said he, "one of the reasons that has made these laws hateful in the Indies, is the fact that you have had a hand in them."

And Rogel went on to explain that he would be able to act with much more freedom in his absence.

Las Casas recognized the truth of this, and

made all haste to get away. He left his diocese just a year after he had entered it.

Although the news had not yet reached him, the Emperor had been obliged practically to revoke the new laws, because of the tumults and rebellions they had caused in his American possessions. We can imagine the Bishop's grief and dismay when he heard of this.

On arriving at the city of Mexico, where the episcopal council was to be held, there was such a tumult that one would have thought a hostile army was about to take possession of the place instead of one poor missionary bishop and four humble monks approaching the walls on foot. The authorities were obliged to write and ask Las Casas to delay his entrance a little, until they could quiet popular excitement.

The Bishop at length came into the city about ten o'clock one morning, and went at once to the Dominican monastery.

The synod or council that Las Casas had come to attend was composed of five or six bishops and the chief theologians and learned men of the colony. Las Casas soon became its leading spirit. Some very bold declarations were made in favor of the Indians, but the question of slavery was very unwillingly touched upon. However, the Viceroy, who was president of the meeting, finally appointed a special council to meet and discuss this matter. The result of the deliberations of both bodies on

the subject was that all Indian slaves, except a few renegade rebels, had been enslaved unjustly, and that all personal service imposed upon those that were not slaves was unlawful.

Of course these conclusions could not be forced upon the country; but copies of them were distributed all over the province, in the hope that they might have an effect upon the minds of men.

Las Casas had now fully decided that he could do more for the Indians in Spain than in his diocese, especially as he could be kept constantly informed by the Dominicans as to what was going on. He therefore appointed a Vicar-General to take his place, and sailed from Vera Cruz in 1547, leaving the shores of America for the last time.

CHAPTER XII

AT COURT

Father Luis Cancer and Father Ladrada were both with Las Casas in Spain. One of the first things Las Casas did, with the approval of the Prince, was to organize a missionary expedition to Florida, with Father Luis Cancer at the head of it. There this faithful friend and devoted missionary soon after met his death at the hands of the Indians.

While in Chiapa the Bishop had written a little book of instructions to his clergy. Formal objection to its teachings was laid before the Council of the Indies, and its author was summoned to come before that body and explain himself. This he did to their entire satisfaction, though not to that of his enemies, who engaged the most famous theologian and lawyer in Spain, Juan Ginés Sepulveda, to dispute the position of Las Casas and answer his arguments. Sepulveda had written a treatise upholding the conquest of the New World by war. The Council of the Indies would not allow this book to be published, but Las Casas had asked them to allow it to be submitted to the universi-

ties of Salamanca and Alcalá for their opinion. This opinion proved to be against it.

Las Casas now undertook to answer Sepulveda's arguments and defend the freedom of his Indians. The war of words waxed fast and furious, and the controversy attracted so much attention that the Emperor ordered the India Council to assemble at Valladolid, to decide whether a war of conquest might justly be carried on against the Indians. The Emperor himself presided, and Las Casas and Sepulveda argued the question before them all. It appears to have been a drawn battle; but at length the Council decided in favor of Sepulveda. The Emperor and the officials of the government, however, must have been of another opinion, for Sepulveda's book was suppressed. At the time of this controversy Las Casas was seventy-six years old.

Soon after this Las Casas resigned his bishopric and the Emperor granted him a pension. He made his home in the Dominican college of St. Gregory, at Valladolid, where his old friend Father Ladrada was with him.

And now, after having labored for the Indians for so many years, crossing and recrossing the ocean, traveling over hundreds of miles of wild country on foot, like St. Paul, "in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in

perils in the sea," he might be seen, day after day and night after night, sitting at his desk, writing letters, memorials, and pamphlets in defense of his beloved Indians. He kept up a constant correspondence with all parts of the New World, and when he heard of any new outrage on the part of the Spaniards against the natives, he at once brought it to the attention of Prince Philip, now regent of the kingdom.

At the end of the year 1551 a number of Dominicans and Franciscans having been induced through his appeals to go out to the Indies, Las Casas went to Seville to see them off. For some reason they were delayed there for ten months, and during that time he was kept busy editing a number of his works, keeping two printing-presses going all the time.

Las Casas must have had a wonderful constitution. His hard life in a tropical country had neither weakened his body nor impaired his mind. All his time from the day of his return to Spain to the time of his death was spent in defense of the Indians; and through his untiring efforts their condition was much improved in Mexico and elsewhere.

Laws had already been passed which allowed the *encomiendas,* as the grants of land and Indians in Spanish America were called, to be held in a family only during two lifetimes. They then reverted to the crown. Thus the Indians were being gradually emancipated. There were

also officers appointed to protect the interests of the crown in the reversion, so that it was no longer possible to repeat the horrors of Hispaniola.

When Las Casas heard that the proposal had been made to allow the holders of *encomiendas* to get possession of them in perpetuity, he went at once to the King and succeeded in preventing it. As Fiske says:

"It is worth remembering that pretty much the only praiseworthy thing Philip ever did was done under Las Casas' influence."

The activity of Las Casas was marvelous. His longest work was his "History of the Indies." At the age of ninety he wrote a "Memorial on Peru," said to be one of his best, and two years later, in 1566, he went to Madrid to speak in person for the Indians of Guatemala. He had heard through the Dominicans that that province had been deprived of its governing body, so that the Indians had no chance of justice, having to go to Mexico if they wished to make any appeal. He was successful in this mission, and the *Audiencia* was restored to Guatemala.

This was the last work of Las Casas. In July of that year, while still in Madrid, he was taken ill and died after a short illness, at the age of ninety-two.

As he lay dying, his brethren, the Dominicans, kneeling about the bed and reciting the

prayers for the dying, he begged them to persevere in their defense of the Indians, and asked them to join him in prayer that he might be forgiven any remissness on his part in the fulfillment of his mission. He was beginning to tell them how he came to enter upon this work when his spirit departed.

Thousands of people attended the funeral of Las Casas. He was buried in Madrid, in the convent chapel of "Our Lady of Atocha."

In early American history there is no one who stands on a level with this remarkable man. Many bitter enemies he had, it is true; such a man,—fearless, outspoken, able, never to be silenced when he was convinced of the righteousness of his cause,—was bound to have. Never during the many years of his long life, did the Indians lack a friend to plead in their behalf. Amid the cupidity, cruelty, and injustice of the Spaniards in the New World his character shines like a star in the darkness of night. We can't do better in closing than to quote the words in which Fiske speaks of him:

"In contemplating such a life as that of Las Casas, all words of eulogy seem weak and frivolous. The historian can only bow in reverent awe before a figure which is, in some respects, the most beautiful and sublime in the annals of Christianity since the Apostolic age. When now and then in the course of the centuries

God's providence brings such a life into the world, the memory of it must be cherished by mankind as one of its most precious and sacred possessions. For the thoughts, the words, the deeds, of such a man there is no death. The sphere of their influence goes on widening forever. They bud, they blossom, they bear fruit, from age to age."

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Knight, A.J.
Las Casas

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